

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 11, line 26 with the following amended paragraph:

Isoforms of BNP can be obtained by extraction from a natural source (e.g., from isolated cells, tissues or bodily fluids), by expression of a recombinant nucleic acid encoding the polypeptide, or by chemical synthesis. For example, standard recombinant technology using expression vectors encoding isoforms of BNP (as described below) can be used. The resulting polypeptides then can be purified using, for example, affinity chromatographic techniques and HPLC. The extent of purification can be measured by any appropriate method, including but not limited to: column chromatography, polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, or high-performance liquid chromatography. Isoforms of BNP can be "engineered" to contain a tag sequence that allows the polypeptide to be purified (e.g., captured onto an affinity matrix). For example, a tag such as c-myc, hemagglutinin, polyhistidine, or FlagTM FLAGTM epitope tag (Kodak) can be used to aid polypeptide purification. Such tags can be inserted anywhere within the polypeptide including at either the carboxyl or amino termini. Other fusions that can be used include enzymes that aid in the detection of the polypeptide, such as alkaline phosphatase.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 21, line 23 with the following amended paragraph:

In immunological assays, an antibody having specific binding affinity for an isoform of BNP or a secondary antibody that binds to such an antibody can be labeled, either directly or indirectly. Suitable labels include, without limitation, radionuclides (e.g., ¹²⁵I, ¹³¹I, ³⁵S, ³H, ³²P, ³³P, or ¹⁴C), fluorescent moieties (e.g., fluorescein, FITC, PerCP, rhodamine, or PE), luminescent moieties (e.g., QdotTM QDOTTTM nanoparticles supplied by the Quantum Dot Corporation, Palo Alto, CA), compounds that absorb light of a defined wavelength, or enzymes (e.g., alkaline phosphatase or horseradish peroxidase). Antibodies can be indirectly labeled by conjugation with biotin then detected with avidin or streptavidin labeled with a molecule described above. Methods of detecting or quantifying a label depend on the nature of the label and are known in the art. Examples of detectors include, without limitation, x-ray film, radioactivity counters, scintillation counters, spectrophotometers, colorimeters, fluorometers, luminometers, and